

Commentary

AL's economic policy shift removes an obstacle to national consensus

By Abu Ahmad
Guest Columnist

Bangladesh Awami League (AL) has recently announced its policy shift on the Bangladesh economy from the one it had been following so far reflecting a greater role for the private sector while a complementary and supportive one for the government sector.

A huge state sector thus was built up without ensuring necessary efficiency. The result was that very soon those industries started losing and the state started pumping in subsidies to keep them operating.

An oversized government is a burden on the nation. Now as Awami League also understands this the nation can chart out its economic goal easily.

should act as a vehicle for investible surplus mobilisation. It emphasised the restoration of confidence in this market. This is a very vital point. If the capital market works, market economy works almost automatically.

One important thing Awami League stressed in its new economic policy was that the country's capital market should act as a vehicle for investible surplus mobilisation. It emphasised the restoration of confidence in this market. This is a vital point.

This is a big shift on the part of Awami League as this party, from the days of independence, had been beating the drum of a socialistic economic policy and opposed market economy.

Now in the backdrop of the changing world situation towards market economy it also shifted its stance towards that direction and people of Bangladesh by and large welcomed the move.

Awami League's obsession with socialism had cost it many votes in the past and kept the party away from power. Never had Awami League adopted socialism with an intention to implement it.

For long two decades Awami League was hesitant to change its economic policy, lest someone said it was giving away the 'spirit' of independence.

built up to the detriment of the national economy. Had at that time Awami League not nationalised industries owned by Bangladeshi entrepreneurs industrialisation process would have taken a decisive course by now through the enlargement of the Middle Class of the country.

When the private individuals were denied the right to set up industries they turned to trading with whatever capital they had. The economy is still unable to bring back that trading capital to industry.

Did Awami League bid adieu to 'socialism' for good? The evidence says 'yes', as when the party adopted market mechanism as a way of production and distribution socialism cannot exist any more.

late for wage and salary rise and also for keeping the industries under public sector control. Awami League used to offer, as alleged by many, its support to this kind of militancy. As Awami League has now changed its stance in favour of a greater role for the private sector, this type of militancy will, at least, be reduced.

Awami League also took a stand in favour of privatisation of industries on selective basis. This is a very important issue for our economy as most of the state-run industrial units are either losing concerns or not making profits at the desired level. The state should not assume the responsibility of running industries excepting in few cases where private initia-

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The most important thing the Awami League said in its recently announced economic policy is that the state's role would be complementary and supportive towards individuals' economic activities. When state's role becomes complementary and supportive many other issues settle on their own.

The very notion of a complementary and supportive state role implies that we should have a small government for which people should pay less tax. Another implication of this is that government will be involving itself less in economic activities and depend least on subsidy programmes to implement its

lives are not coming forward. It should also not be ignored that where both public and private sectors perform the same duty, the former is bound to lose in competition to the latter. Exactly this is happening in Bangladesh. The state-run industrial units are still making profits only where there is no competition from the private sector, such as cement and fertilizer sectors. It is therefore not wise to put the public sector production units into an unequal competition and then pump subsidy to keep them going.

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It has a coherent economic policy at home as none of its major political parties has any big difference with each other about how the economy should be run. This will enhance our position abroad and we can hope to receive better response in terms of foreign capital investment in Bangladesh.

If a government now fails economically, it will be so because of its inefficiency, and the blame cannot be shifted to other parties, especially, on Awami League, as the successive governments used to do.

Awami League also used to oppose foreign aid with conditionalities, which according to it was undermining the sovereignty of the country. But it also failed to show how to meet the demands for resources internally.

Now through its changed stance, Awami League seems to acknowledge the needs for foreign aid, but at the same time emphasises the efficient use of it towards national productivity expansion. This policy of Awami League deserves praise.

Shipping Intelligence

CHITTAGONG PORT

Table with columns: Berthing No, Name of Vessels, Local Agent, Date of Arrival, Leaving, Cargo. Lists various vessels like KYRIKOLA-D, GRUNWALD, PENLING, etc.

Table with columns: Name of Vessels, Local Agent, Date of Arrival, Last Port, Cargo. Lists vessels like Global Mars, Maritime Pride, Athenian Theodore, etc.

Table with columns: Name of Vessels, Local Agent, Date of Arrival, Last Port, Cargo. Lists vessels like Tanary star, Olympic Phoenix, Valleta-II, etc.

Table with columns: Name of Vessels, Local Agent, Date of Arrival, Last Port, Cargo. Lists vessels like Hang Shing, Banglar Sampad, Banglar Kiron, etc.

Table with columns: Name of Vessels, Date of Arrival, Last Port, Local Agent, Loading Ports. Lists vessels like Antjee, Mandiri (cont), Samudra Samrat, etc.

The above were the Wednesday (25/3/92) Shipping position and performance at Chittagong Port as per berthing sheet of CPA supplied by HRC GROUP, Dhaka.

Dhaka Stock Prices

At the close of trading on Mar 19 and Mar 24, 1992

Table with columns: Company, FV/ML, March 19, Mar 24, High, Low. Lists banks like AL Baraka Bank, A.B Bank, City Bank, etc.

Table with columns: Company, FV/ML, March 19, Mar 24, High, Low. Lists engineering companies like Atlas Automobiles, Atlas Bangladesh, etc.

Table with columns: Company, FV/ML, March 19, Mar 24, High, Low. Lists food and allied products like A.B Biscuit, Alpha Tobacco, Aman Sea Food, etc.

Table with columns: Company, FV/ML, March 19, Mar 24, High, Low. Lists fuel and power products like Padma Oil Co., Eastern Lubricant, Oxygen, etc.

Table with columns: Company, FV/ML, March 19, Mar 24, High, Low. Lists pharmaceuticals and chemicals like Ambe Pharma, Bangla Process, Beximco Pharma, etc.

Table with columns: Company, FV/ML, March 19, Mar 24, High, Low. Lists paper and printing products like Eagle Box, Monospool, Paper Converting, etc.

Table with columns: Company, FV/ML, March 19, Mar 24, High, Low. Lists textile products like Alhaj Textile, Arbee Textile, Ashraf Textile, etc.

Table with columns: Company, FV/ML, March 19, Mar 24, High, Low. Lists miscellaneous products like Apex Tannery, Aramit, Bata Shoe, etc.

** FV = Face Value ML = Market Lot NT = Not Traded AL = Allotment Letter XB = Ex-Bonus XD = Ex-Dividend

Handicraft show opens

A two-day exhibition of traditional handicraft began at the Foundation International School at 767, Satmasjid Road, Dhanmondi in Dhaka Friday, reports BSS.

Organised by Henry's Heritage, a group of local handicraft dress manufacturer, the exhibition will remain open from 10 am till 9 pm everyday.

Kidnapped Japanese trader killed

PANAMA CITY, Mar 27: Panamanian President Guillermo Endara Thursday confirmed that Japanese executive Takashi Ota - who was kidnapped March 14 - had been killed, reports AFP.

Endara said in a statement issued by the presidential palace that "weight and height tests" carried out on an unidentified body by investigative police technicians identified the corpse as Ota's.

Ota, the Latin American representative for the electronics firm Citizen, was abducted as he was leaving a Chinese restaurant.

Depletion of ozone over Japan fast

TOKYO, Mar 27: The depletion of the protective ozone layer over Japan is gathering speed, the Meteorological Agency said Friday, reports Reuter.



M A Kader, Jr Secretary of Economic Relations Division and Kim Chol Gin, Director of Asia Region of Ministry of External Economic Relations of North Korea signing the agreed minutes at NEC premises Wednesday for their respective governments. - PID photo

Linking environmental situation to development planning urged

Ecological awareness is the need of the hour to address to the problem of ever-increasing environmental degradation in the country, a German environment journalist said in Dhaka Friday, reports UNB.

Environmental situation should be considered before taking up any development planning of the country, Willy Meyer-Schalk told a seminar of "nature and the environment in film and television" at Goethe Institute in the morning.

He said the media, specially the electronic media, including radio and television, can play a vital role in making the people aware of the country's environmental pollution and also suggest effective measures to contain the problem.

"Without starting ecological awareness among the people, the environmental problems will be increasing," Meyer observed. Television can help make the people aware of environmental issues by showing films, he added.

He said, "Pollution could be easily minimised if coordinated efforts are taken by the researchers, NGOs and government agencies because the problems of environment cannot be solved through government efforts only".

Prof Ikhtiar Omar of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) stressed on united efforts for minimising the country's industrial pollution.

"We should set up industries for the economic wellbeing of the country, but before that we must take safety measures about the hazardous chemical waste pollution of the industrial units."

Speaking on the government's flood action plan, Prof Omar suggested that environmental aspects should also be

taken into consideration before taking up the flood action plan.

"On many occasions we are setting up industries importing harmful technologies without thinking its effect on the environmental pollution", he observed.

Jointly organised by Goethe Institute and "Broti", a women's group working for the development environment, the day-long seminar was also addressed by journalists Mostafa Kamal Majumder and Faruk Faisal.

University teachers, environmentalists, environmental activists and media experts attended the seminar. The seminar included screening of film shows on environmental pollution.

Price Index

Table with columns: Item, Price (Taka per kg or other units). Lists various commodities like Rice, Vegetables, Fruits, Spices, Meat, Tea, etc.

Gold & Silver

Table with columns: Currency, Selling, TT(C), OD Transfer, Buying. Lists prices for US dollar, Pound sterling, DM, etc.

Exchange Rates

Table with columns: Currency, Selling, TT(C), OD Transfer, Buying. Lists exchange rates for US dollar, Pound sterling, DM, etc.

Dollar edges up in Europe

LONDON, Mar 27: The dollar edged higher in late trading in Europe on Thursday, supported by modest demand from investment funds in New York, currency dealers said, reports Reuter. Major European stock markets closed marginally ahead while Wall Street registered early gains.